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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#) [EUN](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)

SUBJECT: SOLANA'S REMARKS ON IRAQI ELECTIONS

REF: A. A. STATE 12757

[B](#). B. STATE 14468

Classified By: USEU POLOFF LEE LITZENBERGER; REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Recent press reports that EU High Rep Solana predicted "disaster" if Iraqi Sunnis don't vote were inaccurate, we were assured by two reliable sources. Instead, we were told Solana said the exclusion of Sunnis from the political process following the vote would be a disaster, and it was therefore imperative to involve them afterward in the drafting of the constitution. The EU member states are considering a draft statement, for issue by FM's January 31. The text they are working off of is extremely positive, and echoes the main themes suggested by the U.S. in Ref (A). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) After reading press reports that EU High Rep Javier Solana predicted "disaster" in Iraq if Iraqi Sunnis do not participate adequately in the upcoming election are inaccurate, we immediately contacted EU Council and Parliament officials for an explanation. We were assured that the press reports were inaccurate. Instead, we were told Solana responded to a question following a presentation January 24 to the EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs, by saying he did not know how the elections would turn out, but that it would be a "disaster" if the Sunnis were not represented in the political process. He further stated that if the Sunni population were not involved in the elections, it was imperative to involve them afterward in the drafting of the constitution.

[1](#)3. (C) The aide to Solana, Paul Reiderman, went on to note that Solana understands that the Iraqis, in fact, intend to involve the Sunnis in the post-election political process, regardless of their level of participation in the vote, and are actively reaching out to Sunni leaders now. Solana applauds this policy, and was seeking to lend support to it in his response. Unfortunately, Reiderman said, that thought was not prominently reported by the wire services. Reiderman noted that the distinction between what Solana said, and the way it was reported, was subtle, "but significant." Parliament contacts have confirmed for us Reiderman's version of Solana's comments.

[1](#)4. (C) We reiterated to Reiderman Ref (A) points on the tone of public statements regarding the elections (which we had shared earlier in the week with the Luxembourg Presidency and Council Secretariat). Reiderman responded by saying that the Luxembourg Presidency draft text for the January 31 EU Foreign Ministers meeting now being considered by members echoes precisely the themes outlined by the U.S.: The Council warmly welcomes the holding of the elections, pays tribute to the courage of those Iraqis who participated and voted, and notes that this constitutes the first democratic election in Iraq in decades. Reiderman added that there may be changes in the text that is ultimately agreed at 25, but the "starting point is very positive."

SCHNABEL

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